Deficiency of rainfall in Rajasthan

3383. SHRI B. S. GNANADESIKAN : Will the Minister of WATER RESOURCES be pleased to state :

(a) whether it is fact that there is a deficiency of (-) 64 percent of overall rainfall in the State of Rajasthan;

(b) if so, what are all the relief measures taken; and

(c) whether Government are taking necessary steps to give financial assistance to the State of Rajasthan to overcome this calamity?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF WATER RESOURCES (SHRIMATI BIJOYA CHAKRAVARTY) : (a) During the monsoon period of year 2002 there was deficiency of 64% rainfall in the State of Rajasthan.

(b) Government of Rajasthan started Relief works from 16.08.2002 in drought-affected areas. At present a labour ceiling of 19.65 lac have been fixed and about 55 lac persons are getting employment on 10 days rotation in a month. 4822 fodder depots have been opened to provide fodder at subsidised rates to the cattle owners. 9.51 lac M.T. fodder have been distributed upto March 2003. At present 8.20 lac stray & abandoned cattle are being maintained in cattle camps and Goshalas for which subsidy is being provided. Cattle feed is being provided at subsidised rates for the milch and other useful cattle to protect them from mal-nutrition. Water is being transported through tankers or by Rail to the problematic 3860 villages. Gratuitous relief is being provided to persons who are not able to earn their livelihood by working on relief works. At present 4.60 lac persons are being benefited under this scheme.

(c) Yes, Sir.

Contaminated underground water in Gangetic basin

3384. SHRI K. B. KRISHNA MURTHY : Will the Minister of WATER RESOURCES be pleased to state :

(a) whether according to a research study recently published in 'Nature' magazine, more than 449 million residents of the Gangetic basin are exposed to arsenic poisoning through contaminated groundwater;

(b) if so, whether the wells surveyed in the region were found to contain five times more arsenic than the permissible limits and whether a deeper region-wise study has been suggested; and